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SALT Security Leaks Do Hidden Damage

By CORD MEYER

WASHINGTON — The leaks of national security secrets that are developing from the SALT debate make it apparent that President Carter needs to demand discretion as well as personal loyalty from subordinates across the government.

Hidden damage which some describe as irreparable is being inflicted by advocates and opponents of the SALT treaty who are passing highly classified information along to the press to support their rival claims as to whether SALT II can be reliably monitored.

The U.S. capacity to verify the SALT agreement has already been weakened by the disclosures. Long-standing confidential relations with NATO allies have been damaged, and the lives of individual intelligence agents have been jeopardized.

Surveying the fallout from recent leaks, the Armed Forces Journal has warned, "By the time SALT II is, or is not, ratified, we will have almost inevitably destroyed any remaining Soviet uncertainty as to our intelligence capabilities, and with it, any of the deterrent effect of such uncertainty."

In attempting to demonstrate the effectiveness of U.S. intelligence gathering methods, anonymous Carter officials have revealed dimensions of our surveillance capability of which the Russians were completely unaware. Not only have SALT II violations or strategic deception been made much easier for the Soviets but the future defenses of the U.S. are being eroded by the misplaced zeal that motivates these revelations.

Consider the consequences of the recent disclosure to the New York Times of the fact that the U.S. is relying heavily on improving a previously secret intelligence base in Norway. Now that the Soviets know this base can be used to monitor their missile tests they can without resorting to encryption adjust their telemetry to prevent accurate outside reading. A promising window on Soviet testing can now be closed in ways that are difficult to detect or counteract.

Moreover, the Soviets have reacted to the revelation of the Norwegian monitoring role with a barrage of propaganda designed to force the closing down of the base. Less dependent than the Turks on Soviet trade and economic assistance, the Norwegians have so far refused to give the Soviets a veto over the use of their territory, but they have been deeply shaken by the violation of Vice President Mondale's pledge to them that their cooperation with the U.S. would be kept secure.

These disclosures of the willingness of allies to cooperate secretly with the U.S. have provoked the Russians into the open enunciation of a new doctrine, which discretion might have avoided. The Soviets now seem to be saying that countries adjacent to them have no right to allow American surveillance activity on their territory. There is nothing in the SALT treaty to prevent the Russians from trying to assert this claim:

Pakistan has already buckled under the pressure. Turkey has given the Soviets a veto over U-2 flights, and Iran needed no encouragement to close down its American bases. The Soviets are in the process of creating a *cordon sanitaire* around their country, which will vastly complicate future

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American intelligence efforts.

Dissension within the Carter administration over how to respond to Castro's covert support of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua has spawned another series of damaging leaks. The Chicago Tribune recently carried the text of a secret CIA memo which attributed to "a reliable Guatemalan source" new information regarding secret Cuban arms shipments.

Cuban counterintelligence, trained and directed by the KGB, will have reacted immediately to this evidence that the Guatemalan communist party has been infiltrated. The unfortunate individual who risked his life to provide the U.S. with this information will have to be quickly withdrawn, if he has not already been arrested and shot.

Congressional staffers report that these revelations are having a chilling effect on the willingness of allied governments to provide the U.S. with sensitive information. Even the most friendly ally must hesitate to cooperate with the U.S. if it has to fear exposure of its sources.

President Carter seems determined to exact new standards of personal allegiance from his administration. An insistence on strict compliance with the oaths his advisers have taken to protect classified information is even more urgently needed. The firing of just one highly placed violator would do more than anything else to restore security discipline to a dangerously leaky ship of state.

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